

NBC MEET THE PRESS

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GLENN/INTERVIEW DONALDSON: Thank you, Jim. Coming up next from St. Petersburg, Fla., where he is campaigning, Sen. John Glenn. Sen. Glenn, thank you for joining us today. GLENN: Thank you. Glad to be with you.

DONALDSON: Now, you've been very critical of President Reagan's policy in Central America. If you were president of the United States today, what would you do? GLENN: Well, I think we need to define the vital interests of our country down there and try to get support of the American people behind it. I think we need to get a better balance between our talk and our force show down there. I think we need to also.... When we talk about go to the source, as the president did the other day, I think we need to remember that when we go to the source, we need to go to sources of some of the problem also there in El Salvador itself, because a lot of the problem there is the internal situation that they have there and the difficulties of the people, and ... You know, I wonder if we can connect this because I'm getting a very bad feedback here on this whole thing. I'm getting an echo that makes it very difficult to talk. Can we check that, please.

DONALDSON: We'll check it, John. Go ahead. GLENN: Good. DONALDSON: Go ahead. We'll check it while you keep telling us about what you'd do as president in Central America. GLENN: Okay. Fine. What I was saying is that I think we need to go for the support of the American people in defining the vital interests down there. We need also to find a better balance between our talk and our show of force in that particular area. And I think that when we go into that area and talk about going to the source, as the president did, and then intimate that that is Cuba or that's the Soviet Union, it also is indigenous in the country itself down there. We have great problems in that area when we have the right-wing death squads killing people with impunity from out of the government circles itself and in effect driving people into the hills and into the support of the guerrilla movement there. It just leaves a great deal to be desired in our whole posture there. It's been very confusing. We have Ambassador Stone, Dick Stone there, and then we have the Contadora Group that we're supporting. We have Kissinger in there. We're supporting the Contras also. At the same time, we're making three different major shows of force in there with two carrier task forces, a battleship task force, and we're going to extend the maneuvers the president calls routine, but they're not routine, and everyone knows that. And so I think we need to define what our real interests are there and what our real posture is going to be. It's been very confusing.

WILL: Senator, last week the House voted to cut off aid from the United States, covert aid to the Contras fighting the regime in Nicaragua. In doing so, they defeated a proposal by a southern conservative Democrat, Mr. Mica, who said, 'Let's cut

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off aid when Nicaragua cuts off aid to El Salvador.' Could you have supported that kind of amendment, the Mica Amendment?

GLENN: Oh, I probably could have supported that because I don't think that the support that we've been giving there in our efforts to dump the government of Nicaragua, which is basically what it is, is going to solve the problem there. Even if all aid is cut off from Nicaragua into El Salvador, and the flow of arms through there is small right now. In fact, it needs a very low flow of arms to really support all the activity that the guerrillas in El Salvador have been making. You know, there are only about 5,000 to 7,000 of the guerrillas there now and they need a few boxes of ammo perhaps and some small flow of arms could actually come by air. So I don't think that's really the final answer in that area under what at least our agreements are with the Organization of the American States, the Rio Treaty. All have indicated a willingness to cooperate in that region, not go in and try and dump governments.

WILL: Senator, I made not have made my question clear. You then would've supported the amendment that did pass the House to cut off aid. You would not have supported the Mica Amendment to make the cut-off of aid contingent on Nicaragua cutting off its aid. GLENN: No. That's right. I would have cut off the aid period in that area or cut off the covert activity in that area. Let me make it clear. Cut off the covert activity in that area, which I think is counter-productive to our purposes in that region.